

Preliminary Amendment Accompanying RCE
Application No. 10/673,782
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Amendments to the Drawings:

No amendments to the Drawings are made herein.

REMARKS

By the foregoing Amendment, Claims 1, 5, 6 and 12 are amended. Entry of the Amendment, and favorable consideration thereof is earnestly requested.

Claim 21 has been allowed. Claims 1-5 and 7-20 stand rejected either under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Weiberle et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,256,570), under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tsukamoto (U.S. Patent No. 6,231,133) in view of Weiberle et al., and/or under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Weiberle et al. in view of Tsukamoto. Applicant respectfully asks the Examiner to reconsider these rejections in view of the above Amendments and the below Remarks.

The present invention is directed to a control scheme for a braking system which is particularly adapted to provide system redundancy, while at the same time reducing the likelihood of complete system failure in the case of catastrophic failure (such as caused by an exploding tire, a fire or the like) of one of the system components being controlled. This has been a problem with known prior art systems, which generally operate in one of two ways.

In the first type of known prior art system, multiple controllers are provided, each of which controls some of the brake system components, but not others. Thus, for example, a system may include two controllers, each providing control signals to half of the brake system components. Thus, in the case of failure of one controller, half of the system components would still be controlled.

In the second type of known prior art system, multiple controllers are provided, each of which provides control signals to all system components on a full time basis (i.e., true redundancy). While this may appear desirable in that should

one of the controllers fail, all of the system components would be receiving control signals from the other controller, in practice, this type of system suffers from at least one significant drawback. Specifically, in the event of a catastrophic failure in one of the system components controlled by both controllers (such as caused by an exploding tire, a fire or the like), both control networks may be shorted out, thus causing both control networks to fail resulting in a complete loss of control of all system components.

The present invention remedies the deficiencies of both types of prior art systems. In the present invention, first and second control networks electrically connect one or more controllers with first and second brake components, respectively. An auxiliary control link electrically connects the first brake component and the second brake component, the auxiliary control link being adapted to transmit control signals which are indicative of demand for braking received by one of the first brake component and the second brake component to the other one of the first brake component and the second brake component when a failure occurs in one of the control networks. Such an arrangement provides redundancy in that should the first controller fail, the first brake component would be provided control signals through the auxiliary control link from the second brake component. Moreover, the system is not prone to complete failure, in that should the first brake component suffer from a catastrophic failure, the first control network may be shorted out -- the second control network being safe since the first brake component was not directly connected to the second control network when it suffered catastrophic failure. Thus, other brake components which have been controlled by the first control network (now shorted out) may be supplied control signals by the other half of the "pair" to which they belong through auxiliary control links, thereby rendering only a single brake component (i.e., the one which suffered from a catastrophic failure anyway) without control signals.

Claims 1 and 12, the two rejected independent claims, require, among other elements, (i) that the “control signals” transmitted via the auxiliary control link when a failure occurs are indicative of demand for braking, and (ii) that the control signals be received by one brake component of the pair and be transmitted from that brake component to the other brake component of the pair.

Applicant respectfully submits that neither Weiberle et al. nor Tsukamoto discloses, teaches or suggests at least the above-highlighted elements.

Weiberle et al. discloses an electrical braking system for a motor vehicle which includes a pedal unit 10, four wheel units 12, 14, 16 and 18, an energy diagnostic unit 20 and a processing unit 22. Each wheel unit (12, 14, 16, 18) is composed of a wheel module (12a, 14a, 16a, 18a), the wheel sensors (e.g., for example, n1, F1i, s1H, etc.) and an actuator (12b, 14b, 16b, 18b). Each wheel module (12a, 14a, 16a, 18a) includes a microcomputer system, a monitoring component, and the power electronics for driving the actuator. In one embodiment, actuator (12b, 14b, 16b, 18b) of each wheel includes a resetting (return) device (control via i1R, i2R, i3R, i4R) which, in response to faults that would prevent the brakes of a wheel from releasing, isolates the wheel in question (i.e., releases the brake on that wheel). In order to be able to manage these types of faults even when an energy diagnostic unit (20) is malfunctioning, the resetting device is activated by the adjacent wheel unit of the same axle (e.g. for 12b from 18a). Thus, for example, if there was a communications failure in communications network K1 such that wheel module 12a stopped receiving control signals, a signal would be sent from wheel module 18a via communications link i1R to actuator 12b so as to cause actuator 12b to release.

Applicant respectfully submits that this system is completely different than what is claimed. First, the communications links cited by the Examiner as being equivalent to the required “auxiliary control link” (i.e., links i1R and i2R in Figure 1) do not transmit control signals indicative of demand for braking. Rather, the communications links pointed to by the Examiner are used to transmit a fault signal indicating that a system fault has been detected, thereby “isolating” and releasing the actuator (i.e., making the actuator not respond to control signals, which due to the fault may be erroneous control signals). There is simply no disclosure, teaching or suggestion of any kind of auxiliary control link via which control signals indicative of demand for braking are transmitted.

Moreover, there is simply no disclosure, teaching or suggestion in Weiberle et al. that the “control signals” which are being transmitted are received by one brake component of the pair and are transmitted from that brake component to the other brake component of the pair. Rather, the fault signals which are transmitted, for example, from wheel module 18a via communications link i1R to actuator 12b so as to cause actuator 12b to release are generated in the wheel module 18a itself. The fault signal is not received by the wheel module 18a (i.e., from a control unit) and transmitted to actuator 12b.

Tsukamoto discloses a vehicle brake controller which detects faults within the system and then applies a modified control algorithm if such a fault is detected. However, there is no disclosure, teaching or suggestion of either (i) an auxiliary control link via which are transmitted, when a failure occurs, “control signals” indicative of demand for braking, or (ii) that the control signals be received by one brake component of the pair and be transmitted from that brake component to the other brake component of the pair.

First, the communications link cited by the Examiner as being equivalent to the required "auxiliary control link" (i.e., the link between brake pressure controllers 10F and 10R in Figure 19) does not transmit the control signals indicative of demand for braking. Rather, the communications link pointed to by the Examiner is used to transmit a "no fault" signal indicating that no system fault has been detected. Moreover, the signals which are transmitted via the communications link in question are not transmitted when a failure occurs as is required by the rejected claims. In fact, in order for the Tsukamoto system to operate as disclosed the communications link in question must operate in just the opposite fashion. More specifically, Tsukamoto discloses that each brake pressure controller 10F, 10R expects to receive a "no fault" signal from the other brake pressure controller 10F, 10R at all times unless a fault is detected. See Column 18, lines 46-54:

When the brake pressure controller 10F (10R) has a fault, or when energization from the battery 11F (11R) is interrupted, the process itself can no longer be executed and a fault information signal cannot be input to the other controller 10R (10F).

Therefore by determining that a fault has occurred unless a signal to the contrary is input in the step S402, a fault can be detected in the other controller, not only in the actuator but also in the controller or battery.

(emphasis added). Thus, unlike the claimed invention, in the Tsukamoto system, the "auxiliary control link" is only used to transmit signals when no failure has occurred.

Furthermore, there is simply no disclosure, teaching or suggestion in Tsukamoto that the "control signals" which are being transmitted are received by one brake component of the pair and are transmitted from that brake component to the other brake component of the pair. Rather, the "no fault" signals which are transmitted, for example, between brake pressure controllers 10F and 10R in Figure 19 via the communications link therebetween are generated in the brake

pressure controllers 10F and 10R themselves. The "no fault" signals are not received by one of the brake pressure controllers 10F and 10R and transmitted therefrom to the other one of the brake pressure controllers 10F and 10R.

Since neither of the cited prior art references discloses, teaches or suggests in any way all of the elements of any claim of the present application, Applicant respectfully submits that a combination of the two would not render any claim thereof unpatentable.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that all pending claims, namely Claims 1-21, are patentable over the references of record, and earnestly solicits allowance of the same.

Respectfully submitted,



Wesley W. Whitmyer, Jr., Reg. No. 33,558
Todd M. Oberdick, Reg. No. 44,268
ST. ONGE STEWARD JOHNSTON & REENS LLC
986 Bedford Street
Stamford, Connecticut 06905-5619
(203) 324-6155
Attorneys for Applicant